



## STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

### TIPS FOR MANAGING “FLU STRESS”

News of a flu pandemic causes stress for a lot of people – that’s to be expected. Sometimes stress can be a motivator to do extra work. But too much stress can get in the way of staying clam and taking the steps needed to stay healthy. This tip sheet offers ideas to help your emotional and physical energy in healthy ways. The goal is to control stress about the flu so you can go on with your life while getting ready for or living through a flu pandemic.

#### LEARN ABOUT THE FLU

- Learn as much as you can from reliable sources – symptoms of the flu, how it is spread and best ways to protect yourself.
- Don’t listen constantly to “flu news” – too much constant information can increase your worries.
- Do stay updated daily on the news during and beyond the pandemic phase because things change daily.
- Misinformation/rumors will be around. Be sure to consult reliable sources.

*For trustworthy information about the flu go to [www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov). Health questions? Call the Flu Hotline at 222-8022.*

#### PLAN AHEAD: expect the best and prepare for the worst

- Planning positive actions that will protect you and your family will reduce stress.
- Keep daily routines. Routines will reassure family members and reduce their stress in times of crisis.
- Teach family members good health practices – sneeze/cough into your elbow and wash hands often. Keep hands away from mouth, nose and eyes as much as possible.
- Eat a healthy diet, exercise and get enough rest.
- Make a list of doctors, pharmacy, family and emergency contact numbers for each family member.
- Make sure doctor-prescribed medicines are updated and filled for all family members.
- Stock your home with a 2-week supply of water, food, batteries and medical supplies. Don’t forget pets.
- Plan for disruption in daily schedules due to school and business closings. Be flexible. Start a new routine for “at home” days. (What have you imagined doing at home if you only had more time?)

## **BE EMOTIONALLY PREPARED**

- Maintain and develop your support system – sharing concerns with others will reduce your stress.
- Realize fear, grief, loneliness and stress are natural human emotions during stressful times.
- Accept that you are doing all you can – and know that you are unable to control all things. Lower your demands on yourself.
- If you see negative behaviors directed at others with the flu, try to support those that are hurt.
- If you are kept apart from your usual supports because of the flu, stay in touch through cell, computer, social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Identify and do “comfort” activities – music, exercise, reading, yoga, crosswords, etc.
- Practice positive thinking.
- Make use of community services when you need them. Know when you need help and get the help you deserve. If you feel depressed, hopeless, very fearful or very angry or are experiencing physical problems with no medical explanation, consider seeking help. Call 211 for information on what is available or the RI Council of Community Mental Health Organizations, 228-7990, for the community mental health organization nearest you.

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